OCCURRENCE OF *PAGRUS AURIGA* VALENCIENNES, 1843 (PISCES: SPARIDAE) IN THE CATALAN SEA.

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ABSTRACT. - Five juvenile specimens of *Pagrus auriga* Valenciennes, 1843 with a standard length between 120.5 and 148.5 mm have been captured with a trammel net, at a depth between 5 and 10 m, in Tarragona (Catalan Sea).

Key-words. - Sparidae, *Pagrus auriga*, MED, Catalan Sea, First record.

According to Bauchot and Hureau (1990), *Pagrus auriga* is a benthopelagic species that lives over hard bottoms. The species has been recorded from Portugal to Angola, including Madeira and the Canaries. In the Canary Islands this species is very common between 5-200 m depth (Brito, 1991). Its depth range is from inshore waters to 200 m and the juveniles tend to be found closer to the coast. *P. auriga* has been also recorded throughout Mediterranean Sea but it is very rare in the north of this sea (Bauchot and Hureau, 1986) where, according to Fischer *et al.* (1987) this species has been found only in Sicily, Corsica and Ligurian coast. Along the Spanish coast, *P. auriga* has been found hitherto in the SE (between Cabo de Palos and Cabo de la Nao). The capture of five specimens of *P. auriga* in Les Cases d'Alcanar (Tarragona) establishes the first record of this species in the whole Catalan Sea.

The protogynous hermaphroditism of *P. auriga* and, consequently the different coloration of its juveniles, females and males, has been the main cause of its misidentification with other species of *Pagrus*, especially with *P. caeruleostictus*.

Table I. - Morphometric (in % of SL) and meristic characters in five specimens of *Pagrus auriga*. (* = Scales between lateral line and fourth dorsal spine). Specimens 1 to 3 in the fish collection of the Laboratory of Zoology, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra, Barcelona, Spain. Specimens 4 and 5 in the DARP, Les Cases d'Alcanar, Tarragona, Spain.

Specimen	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Date	**31-I**	**22-II**	**22-II**	**10-I**	**23-XI**
Morphometrics (mm)					
Standard length	148.10	137.42	120.50	127.20	128.11
Cephalic length	52.20	46.56	43.60	45.10	45.75
Preorbital length	16.40	14.87	13.13	14.94	14.14
Ocular diameter	13.30	12.53	12.44	12.36	12.28
Body depth	73.37	66.76	57.37	62.85	61.62
Caudal peduncle depth	17.69	1s.13	13.66	14.06	14.16
Preanal length	101.00	90.85	82.86	85.44	84.96
Anal length	31.20	28.20	25.32	24.90	25.50
Dorsal length	78.33	73.46	64.33	66.90	69.38
Meristics					
Fins rays dorsal	XI-11	XI-12	XI-12	XI-12	XI-12
Fins rays anal	III-9	III-9	III-9	III-8	III-9
Lateral line scales	51	51	52	50	50
Scales L.I.-IVD*	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
Lower gillrakers	9	9	9	9	10
Rows of molars	2	2	2	2	2

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The relationships between *Sparus* and *Pagrus* was clarified by Bianchi (1984) who also provides the characters to separe *P. auriga* from the other three Atlanto-Mediterranean species of *Pagrus* (*P. caeruleostictus*, *P. pagrus* and *P. africanus*).

Table I shows the main morphometric (in % of the SL) and meristic characters of the five specimens studied. They all possess a well developed preopercular squamation and 6.5 scales between the lateral line and the fourth dorsal spine. Its coloration is the same as the juvenile specimen figured in Brito (1991, Fig. 119): pink with silvery reflections and 6 dark red, alternatively broad and narrow, transverse bands. The first band crosses the eye; the second one crosses the posterior end of the operculum and the remainder four are located as in Bauchot and Hureau (1986).

The Mediterranean distribution of *P. auriga* is the expected one within the family Sparidae which, according to Bauchot and Hureau (1986) are tropical and temperate fish. Many members of this family as *Dentex (Cheimerius) gibbosus*, *D. (Polysteganus) maroccanus*, *D. (P.) macrophthalmus*, *Pagellus bellotti bellottii* and *Pagrus caeruleostictus*, are common in the southwestern basin, abundant in the eastern basin and very rare, or absent, in the northwestern basin. This distribution pattern is due to the fact that the eastern Mediterranean basin is warmer than the western one. The scarcity or absence of the above mentioned species in the NW Mediterranean basin seem to confirm the existence of some remarkable latitudinal differences in the fish fauna of this basin, as was postulated by Tortonese (1964) and by Quignard (1978). Nevertheless, according to Tortonese (1964), the east-west differences between the two main Mediterranean basins are more pronounced than the differences from north to south. In fact, some species with a tropical origin, as *Diplodus cervinus cervinus*, which were very rare in the NW Mediterranean a few years ago (Oliver, 1966) are actually well established in the Golfe du Lion (Quignard and Farrugio, 1982).

The presence of *P. auriga* in the Catalan Sea cannot be considered accidental, because specimens of this species are caught throughout year along Tarragona coast although, mainly, in autumn and winter.

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